

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-05

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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FOL TEL SENT ACTION DACCAINFO MOSCOW USUN NY FROM STATE
REPEATED TO YOU

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E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: EAID, BG, UR, US

SUBJECT: PRESS GUIDANCE ON SOVIET WHEAT DIVERSIONS

1. WASHINGTON POST AUGUST 4 CARRIED DACCA DATELINED WIRE
SERVICE STORY TO EFFECT THAT 200,000 TONS DIVERTED WHEAT OF
US ORIGIN AND THAT BDG HAS PLEDGED TO REPLACE IT WITH PL 480
GRAIN. DEPT PREPARED TO RESPOND TO INQUIRIES WITH THE FOL-
LOWING CONTINGENCY PRESS GUIDANCE:

2. QUESTION: WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE SOVIETS ARE DIVERTING
TO BANGLADESH 200,000 TONS OF WHEAT PURCHASED HERE. IS THIS
CORRECT?

ANSWER: THE USG HAS BEEN DEEPLY CONCERNED WITH PROBLEMS
OF FOOD SUPPLIES FOR BANGLADESH AND HAS SUPPLIED MORE THAN
ONE MILLION TONS IN THE PAST 18 MONTHS. WE HAVE ALLOCATED
AN ADDITIONAL 280,000 TONS OF WHEAT FOR SHIPMENT IN THE JULY
TO SEPTEMBER PERIOD OF THIS YEAR. THIS WHEAT WILL BEGIN
REACHING BANGLADESH IN SEPTEMBER.

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IN RECENT WEEKS IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THERE COULD BE A SERIOUS SHORTFALL IN SEPTEMBER IN BANGLADESH SINCE GOVERNMENT STOCKS ARE BEING DRAWN DOWN WITHOUT OFFSETTING ARRIVALS OF IMPORTS. TO MEET THIS SHORT-TERM NEED THE BDG MADE EFFORTS TO LOCATE WHEAT SUPPLIES IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE FOR SHIPMENT OR ALREADY ON BOARD SHIPS THAT MIGHT BE DIVERTED TO BANGLADESH. IT APPEARED THAT THE MOST LOGICAL SOURCE FOR SUCH QUANTITIES OF WHEAT WERE SOVIET COMMERCIAL PURCHASES. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE AGREED TO SUCH A DIVERSION, AND THAT THE SOURCE OF THESE SHIPMENTS WILL BE CANADIAN AND AUSTRALIAN-ORIGIN GRAIN. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, NO U.S.-ORIGIN GRAIN IS BEING DIVERTED BY THE USSR.

3. QUESTION: HAS THE BDG ASKED US TO REPLACE GRAIN DIVERTED BY THE USSR TO BANGLADESH?

ANSWER : THROUGHOUT THIS PERIOD WE HAVE REMAINED IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT. ONE SUBJECT UNDER DISCUSSION AT THE MOMENT IS REPLACEMENT OF THE SOVIET DIVERSIONS. WE ARE UNABLE TO PROVIDE A COMMITMENT FOR REPLACEMENT AT THIS TIME. THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT IS AWARE THAT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF POSSIBILITIES FOR HANDLING THIS MATTER.

4. QUESTION: DID WE DISCUSS THE WHEAT DIVERSION WITH THE SOVIETS?

ANSWER: WE DID TOUCH BASE INFORMALLY WITH THE SOVIET EMBASSY HERE IN WASHINGTON. THE SOVIET EMBASSY HAS NOT RAISED WITH US THEIR INTENTIONS OR DESIRES. IN OUR VIEW THE SOVIET DIVERSIONS CAN MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE MASSIVE INTERNATIONAL EFFORT TO RESPOND TO THE CRUCIAL FOOD REQUIREMENTS OF BANGLADESH IN THIS DIFFICULT PERIOD.

5. QUESTION: WHAT IS THE USG DOING ABOUT PROVIDING FOOD OVER AND ABOVE THE 280,000 TONS PRESENTLY AUTHORIZED?

ANSWER: WE HOPE TO MAKE ADDITIONAL FOOD AVAILABLE FOR SHIPMENT LATER IN THE YEAR, BUT WE ARE UNABLE TO MAKE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COMMITMENTS AT PRESENT BECAUSE AVAILABILITIES HAVE NOT BEEN DETERMINED FOR THE REMAINDER OF FY 1974.

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